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# THE ANTI-UNION.

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No. VIII.

## TO THE PEOPLE OF Ireland.

IT must be matter of grief and alarm to every reflecting Patriot, to observe what slight emotion the question of an Union with Great Britain, has excited in the public mind. Tho' several weeks have now elapsed since this measure was officially announced, and tho' it be known almost to a certainty, that nothing but the popular voice being against it, can defeat its success, yet in no part of Ireland, Dublin excepted, have the people declared what is now their opinion, and what in future will be their conduct, should it take place. How is this apparent indifference, and cold apathy, upon a subject which in its very infancy is so momentous, and will in its effects be so durable, to be accounted for? In order to expose the irreparable danger of such a conduct, and to point out with perspicuity the tone and action which Ireland should now adopt, it may be proper to enquire from whence arises her silence and serenity, at this eventful moment.

In the year 1782, when a few patriotic members in our Parliament, introduced the celebrated questions of free trade, and free constitution, the people stood not idle spectators of their efforts, nor damped their ardour by an obtuse insensibility to the welfare of their country—but on the contrary, a spirit of national love, animated every bosom, and dictated to every tongue, language becoming a people determined to be free! What was the consequence? Your virtuous minority, once feeble in point of numbers, and almost shrinking from the task they had undertaken, soon swelled to a triumphant and bold majority, which obliged the Minister of the day, to ratify the independence of your Legislature, and the freedom of your Commerce. Suppose that on that memorable occasion, instead of resorting to the manly and constitutional measures to which you then resorted, you had, as now, sat quiet in your houses, wailing over the public misfortunes, and bending to their influence, without a struggle to counteract them; would not the exertions of your political friends have been overborne by your political enemies? would not your commerce have continued to languish in its chains, and your Par-

liament to be a mere Register Office for the British Cabinet. From such disgrace and calamity were you rescued, by your exertions in 1782.

What did your exertions in 1785 do for you? Under the artful pretext of extending your trade, and establishing upon a permanent, fair, and enlarged basis, the commerce of this country with Great Britain, certain Propositions were introduced into your House of Commons, which shewed an exterior both captivating and delusive, but under which lurked certain stipulations, which would have left your commerce at the mercy of the Parliament of England, and would have stolen from your Legislature, its independent capacity, in all external concerns;—What followed? The same men, whose talents, and whose virtues, seconded by your authority, had made you a free nation, stepped forward with enthusiastic ardor in your cause; they detected the cheat, they exposed the snare which was so artfully laid for your commerce and liberty; the popular spirit rose at once, with a dignified majesty, and augmented strength; it denounced the measure—what was the consequence? The Minister trembled!—abandoned this favourite object of his heart—and you continued free. So much for popular, constitutional efforts. You all know what they have done for you. I believe there is hardly a man in the nation, who is not in the actual enjoyment of some benefit, which can be traced back to this source. The manufacturer, by the markets it has opened for him—the husbandman, by the high price for the products of the earth—and the landlord, by the augmentation of his rents. Multifarious and important, indeed, are the rewards which you have already received, and which, if this Union, deadly to your prosperity, does not come to pass, you must continue to receive, for having appeared, at those interesting epochs, the active and dauntless champions of your country. With these facts impressed upon your memory, with the fruits of your toil in your very hands, it cannot but be matter of astonishment, to a calm observer, that you could hear without loud indignation, that shortly an attempt is to be made, not merely to reduce your Parliament to the imperfect and impotent state in which it was antecedent to 82; not merely to curtail it of part of its independence, as was attempted in 85; but actually to annihilate it entirely, and to put commerce, treasure, liberty, every thing, for ever, into the custody of that nation, which so long held you in bondage, and of that very Minister, who so recently endeavoured surreptitiously to deprive you of both trade and freedom. To what, I ask again, am I to attri-

bute this drowsy silence—this national torpor, at an hour so eventful, and when, to the plainest understanding, it must be evident, that the honor, the interest, and the liberty of this island, materially depend upon the people of all descriptions speaking decisively against the adoption of the Union? Shall I ascribe it to a defect of national virtue—to a listless attachment to the cause of liberty—to a stupid ignorance of their own interests—or to the criminal hope, that the disastrous effects of this measure, will touch with but a feeble hand, the people of the present day, and that it will be only on their children and their successors, that its calamities will operate?—No!—No!—Away with such base and ignoble motives! Every portion of the history of this country, bears ample testimony that her sons were never actuated by sentiments so unbecoming the dignity of the human character. To motives less culpable in their essence, but which will not be less fatal in their consequence, are to be ascribed the cause that the popular understanding continues, as it were, at rest, and the people dumb. The internal calamities which so lately convulsed this country, have left behind them, in the breast of multitudes of the sincerest lovers of freedom and the constitution, a panic and an asperity towards the authors of these troubles, which monopolize all the anxieties and feelings of the mind, and make them listen with calmness, perhaps with pleasure, to the proposition of an Union, which they are, with more art than truth, told, will put an end to these domestic distractions, and leave the kingdom in a state of happy quiescence. If those who are deluded by this argument, will, but for a moment, impartially examine it, and ask themselves, how will it have such an effect? its artificial strength will instantly vanish, and its fallacy be apparent. The Union can calm the disquiet of perturbed spirits only, by gratifying their wishes, and removing those causes which make them discontented and turbulent: Now the people of this description, are generally considered as Catholics, Reformers, and Republicans: Now how would an Union gratify and appease any, or all of these? The Catholic wishes to be allowed to sit in Parliament, and to have all the offices and the dignities of the state laid open to him; his exclusion from these, is the parent of his discontent; and is it reasonable to suppose, that by taking away the Parliament entirely, by depriving all public situations of their ancient lustre, and making them contemptible, and then giving him a share of this refuse, that his ambition, or his pride, would be gratified, and that he, who is now so ardent and restless to become a perfect member of a perfect state, after an Union would be satisfied with any share, however ample, of places and honours, thus mutilated, and thus debased; and in a country thus stripped of its imperial state, and thus provincialized. The Catholics themselves will tell you it will not, and that they will never sell their

country, for any partial privileges that may be offered to them in return.

As to the Reformer, how is he to be soothed and silenced by this Union? Tho' he is ready to confess that numerous and important are the benefits conferred on the nation by the wisdom of the Parliament, and that our island has risen of late to a degree of unexpected prosperity, yet he still thinks, that the Parliament has not been as faithful to its trust, as it should have been, and that the way to render it more obedient to the wishes of the people is, by reforming the representation. To obtain this reform, he has been impatient and assiduous for years, and the defeat of his wishes, has been the cause of his complaints, and his irritation. And what remedy is proposed to lull him for the future in content, and to raise new affections in his heart, for the constitution and the country? Will it be credited, that to effect this, the first is to be destroyed, *in toto*, and the latter made not worth living in? Is there any one so weak, or so credulous, as soberly to think that the man who is discontented with the Parliament in its present shape, will be satisfied, when there is none at all?—that he who is indignant because a portion of our representatives is more under the control of the Minister, than their Constituents, will be calmed, when he sees that all the representatives will be out of the reach of the authority of the people, and entirely within the dominion of the crown; that satisfaction will result from making that which is now bad, much worse, and removing for ever the possibility of amendment? These observations would appear nugatory and childish, but that there are persons who vainly imagine, that the reformer would cease to murmur, when the constitution would cease to exist.

I shall next notice the republican party;—among these there are certainly many whom it would be vain to attempt to win back to the Government, by any amelioration of the constitution—but I believe there are multitudes of that description, who were alienated from our laws, by seeing them abused with impunity, and by an absolute despondence, that any appeal to the legislature would produce a salutary change, and who, after experiencing the futility of endeavouring to reform by force, would be glad to return to the bosom of the constitution, and unite in temperate efforts for its improvement. If a Union should take place, what would become of these men? Would they not, with equal activity, but with more caution, propagate and mature the seeds of civil discord and revolt, and might they not gain from among the best friends of the monarchy, such advocates and coadjutors, as would make them now as formidable in talent, as they were before in numbers? This is but a reasonable supposition;—And how, then, is tranquillity to be produced by a measure which will excite additional inflammation, in those already irritated, is solicited by no description of the people, and which will reduce Ireland to

a state more wretched than antecedent to her liberation by the volunteers. Contemplating all this, I cannot see in this Union any thing but the rudiments of a discord and convulsion that may one day separate these kingdoms, and which, as a friend to the connection, I most sincerely deprecate.

When I look to Scotland, and find that the Union there, so far from producing public tranquillity, excited discontents, which repeatedly broke out in acts of outrage, and that, since the æra of the Union, that country has been visited by two Rebellions, and that, in the manifesto published by the Lords and Gentry engaged in the first rebellion, the Union is stated as a principal cause. I, therefore, exhort all those who have no other reason for being friendly to this measure than that it will bring back halcyon days to distracted Ireland, to dismiss such a delusive hope from their minds, and not to accumulate our misfortunes by countenancing an Union.

There are others who seem to be withheld from publicly expressing their opposition to this measure by conceiving it to be above the reach of their capacities. Upon no occasion could the plea of ignorance and incapacity be more inadmissible than on this; because, though there are many who may not be able to penetrate into the remote consequences of this measure, or, even see all its immediate evils; yet, there are certain consequences to follow instantly from it, so fatal and so obvious, so irreparable and so deadly to our interest, that the shallowest understanding must see them, and its most strenuous advocate confess them. First, the downfall of our capital; and, in this we are not merely to calculate the ruin of the arts and sciences there collected—her university, her magnificent buildings, and that general splendor which is already beginning to rival the metropolis of our jealous sister. But, we are principally to look to the gross injustice which would thus be inflicted on thousands of innocent citizens, who, by their property being annihilated, would, from a state of ease or opulence, be reduced to the most afflictive distress. And, also, to the loss of that capacious market, where purchasers are to be found for almost every thing vendible, which the industry of man in the remotest corner of the island can produce. Secondly, the great efflux of absentees, with their wealth, their manners, their learning, and their love for poor Ireland. Thirdly, the loss of our Parliament, which, though not as virtuous as it ought to be, has done much for this kingdom, and must always be more solicitous for our welfare than the Legislature of a foreign country. Fourthly, committing the custody of our purse, our trade, and our liberty to the guardianship of a country, which abused this very trust before, when in her hands; and to be freed from whose influence we once regarded as the most fortunate event in the annals of our history. I might go

on enumerating further instances, but, I shall content myself with adding one more. Fifthly, our having such a paucity of Lords and Commons in the British Parliament as would render them utterly incapable of ever doing justice to their own country when the interest of England was in question. Suppose, therefore, that, in case of an Union, some commercial favors were to be conceded to us, how could they counterbalance the surrender of such national advantages, of every thing which can enrich and exalt a nation? Though we are thus, in case of an Union, to abdicate our independence—to renounce our right to legislate for ourselves—to adopt a system, under which, Scotland starves; and to abandon a system, under which, Ireland flourishes; yet, there are some persons who seem insensible to these calamities; and, though astute and vociferous in matters less intelligible and important, appear unable to see and to feel with common sense on this subject. If they suffer the moment of instruction and action to pass unprofitably by, let them remember that it can never return.

It is asserted, that Cork, and the towns on the western coast will not merely give this measure a silent sanction, but will be active in its favor, and for this reason, that they will be materially served by it. In answer to this I must observe, that such might be the case, situated conveniently as they are for the American and West Indian trade? if the liberty of directly importing into Ireland the returns of the cargoes exported from hence to America and the West Indies was to be acquired by an Union; but as they possess that privilege at this moment, they may now derive from it every benefit which the physical felicity of their situation for such a trade may give them. If these places then can derive any immediate benefit from an Union, it must be by sacrifices made of English commerce to their service. Suppose that improbable event to take place, how would they be secured to them, either by the terms of the Union, or by the English merchants regarding the prosperity of these towns with as friendly an inclination as the prosperity of their own, and, therefore, not entertaining any jealousy at their commercial acquisitions. As to the act of the Union being their security, let its violation in the case of Scotland, in the instance of the malt tax, warn them not to be too confident on that head; and as to the disinterested spirit of the British merchant being their security, let the fate of the tobacco trade at Glasgow warn them not to be too confident on that head. But should the people in the south and west of Ireland, in order to advance their own narrow interests, agree to a measure which would ruin the trade of Dublin, and impoverish almost the whole of the kingdom, would not their own conduct, to a demonstration, prove how little they ought to rely upon the just and generous disposition of the English mer-

chant towards them—for if they could be so selfish and cramp-minded as to desolate and destroy their own capital in order to derive from the wreck a commercial ascendancy, could they hope more generous feelings in the traders of London, or Liverpool, or Bristol, towards themselves? Certainly not. They may be assured whenever their trade should become formidable, or come in competition with that of British merchants, it would be made to bend and shrink to it: and where could they find redress? Is it from their own representatives in the English Parliament, where they would be found impotent in point of numbers, impotent in point of dignity, with the British nation to oppose their claims, and without the Irish nation to support them. Indeed I cannot look upon this report of the friendly disposition of Cork and the Western districts towards this measure in any other point of view than as a gross libel on the inhabitants of these places, and as a base artifice, adopted to induce the Minister to persevere in this measure. I cannot bring my mind to believe, that any men who intend to make Ireland their residence, can be so base and so abandoned, so destitute of shame and so indifferent to the opinion of their fellow-citizens, to the honor of their country and their own, as to sell, for any peculiar and personal advantages, all that, as members of an exalted community, we ought to estimate and grasp with a tenderness as sincere and affectionate as a parent would his child. If the people of Cork and the West feel, as I believe they do feel, with a noble and disinterested spirit on this subject—if their patriotism be not confined within the narrow sphere of their own coasts, but is as wide as their island, I hope they will come forward, and by an unequivocal declaration against an Union, remove the slander which has been cast on their character, and repress those hopes which their supposed patronage of the measure have excited.

I have now stated the reasons which occurred to me as those which have restrained the public sentiment from bursting out on the first notification of this measure, and the danger of any longer continuing silent: I shall, therefore, conclude, after making some general observations on the subject. If the people continue pertinaciously silent, it will be considered by the Minister as an assent to the measure, and will, in truth, amount to an unanswerable argument in its favor. Should he be induced by this tacit approbation to intro-

duce the Union into Parliament, and thus leave no doubt of his intention to deprive us of our constitution, rest assured, that all your declamation afterwards will come with inefficacy, because it will then be peculiarly his interest to complete the work of your subjugation, that your Legislature may not afterwards have it in its power to proclaim the foul act to the world, and to secure its future existence, by placing it more out of the influence of the court.

Before you had a constitution that was worth that appellation, and when you were only speculating on the probable good effects that you might derive from possessing one, you assembled in your respective counties, and declared your determination no longer to submit to a nominal freedom, and to the actual miseries of a state of slavery. This sentiment resounded through your country; it gave vigor to the down-cast virtue of your independent representatives. They called for your emancipation in the dictatorial language of a patriotic people, and they obtained it. And shall you now, when it is not necessary to calculate on doubtful consequences in order to give energy to your souls and fluency to your tongues—when the consequent evils of a Union are as glaring as the Sun at noon day; and the existence of the benefits of our present system are to be seen wherever we turn our eyes, or fix our thoughts? Shall we, under such circumstances, continue mute spectators of the occurrence of a measure which blasts all the hopes of our country for ever, and operate upon her constitution with the same obliterating influence as the grave operates on ourselves? If such shall be your conduct if you will allow the Minister to strip you of all your political advantages, and make no effort, nor express any concern on the occasion, be assured, he will avail himself of your meekness and taciturnity, and not only unite these kingdoms as he threatens; but unite them in the very best way possible for England, and the very worst way possible for Ireland. But if, on the other hand, you exert yourselves as becomes men, as becomes freemen, to baffle its success, though your exertions should prove ineffectual, you will still have the consolation of having discharged your duty, and the surrounding nations that will be witnesses of your conduct may lament your fate; but cannot despise your name—and though you will be doomed to bear a burthen on your back, you will be free from any grace on your brow.

A.